

TUNABLE HOLOGRAPHIC FILTER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/193,583, filed March 30, 2000.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Many different applications operate using optical techniques. Optical techniques allow many different wavelengths to be multiplexed on the same fiber. Each wavelength can represent a separate data stream. In some applications, it may be desirable to obtain parts of said data stream from the waveguide without obtaining other parts of the data stream from the waveguide. It may also be desirable to add new multiplexed data to the optical stream already present on the waveguide.

[0003] An add/drop multiplexer is often used to carry out the addition or removal of channels from an optical signal in a waveguide such as a fiber. Different kinds of add/drop multiplexers are known.

SUMMARY

[0004] The present application teaches a tunable technique which allows adding and/or dropping a wavelength channel in a waveguide such as a fiber.

[0005] A technique disclosed according to the present application operates by use of a hologram which preferentially changes some characteristic of one or more wavelengths of the optical signal without correspondingly changing other wavelengths of the same optical signal. Some aspect of the hologram is tunable in order to select a different wavelength / channel for changing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] These and other aspects of the invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0007] Figure 1 shows an embodiment of a tunable add/drop multiplexer where the hologram is rotatable;

[0008] Figure 2 shows a different embodiment of a tunable add/drop multiplexer where the hologram is also rotatable;

[0009] Figure 3 shows an electrically tunable holographic add/drop multiplexer;

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[0010] Figure 4 shows an embodiment of a tunable add/drop multiplexer using a moving mirror;

[0011] Figure 5 shows an intensity chart.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] Figure 1 shows a first embodiment of a technique which uses a reflection hologram, which allows tunable selection of channels to be removed from a waveguide. The waveguide can be a fiber or other optical-signal-containing element.

[0013] The input signal 100 initially travels in the input waveguide 99. The input signal 100 is applied via an optical element 105 which may be a GRIN lens, and to a material 110 which includes a hologram 115 recorded in a holographic recording material, which may be, for example, a photorefractive crystal. The hologram that is formed may be a grating in that crystal.

[0014] Light is diffracted only if the Bragg matching condition is satisfied. The light wavelength λ should fulfill the relation

$$\lambda \propto 2 n \Lambda,$$

[0015] where n is the averaged refractive index of the holographic storage material and Λ is the effective period length of the holographic grating, for reflection holograms. For

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transmission holograms, the relation $\lambda \propto 2 \Lambda$ is followed. The effective period length Λ is the distance between two fringes of the grating along a line that is parallel to the incoming light beam.

[0016] The recorded hologram is rotated around an axis that is shown by the dotted line in Fig. 1. Tunability of the add/drop multiplexer is achieved by changing the effective period length Λ by changing the rotational position of the grating. As this rotational position changes, the light travels in a different direction with regard to the holographic structure stored in the recording material. For incidence perpendicular to the fringes of the holographic grating, a small period length is present and small wavelengths are diffracted. In contrast, for non-perpendicular incidence, the effective period length of the gratings is increased and hence light of larger wavelengths is diffracted.

[0017] The wavelength which matches the Bragg condition of the hologram 115 is reflected through an optical system 120. The hologram 115 is rotated to select the desired selected wavelengths, i.e., to tune the reflected signal wavelength. The wavelengths which do not match the hologram are transmitted through the crystal 110 substantially unattenuated, and coupled

[0018] As an alternative to using an "Y" junction to add light of the desired wavelength, it may also be possible to use the hologram itself for the "add" function, i.e., to add to the element 125 a second beam that is Bragg matched to the grating for the wavelengths that should be added to the data stream.

[0020] Hence, the same device can be used for either an add function, or for a drop function. By doing both operations, the device can be used for both adding and drop.

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selected wavelength is Bragg matched to the tunable holographic filter.

[0022] Replacing the electronic detection system 120, 130, 135, 135, 140, and 145 by an optical system as described above and using this port as an drop device and utilizing the optical add function as described above in the section describing alternatives to the "y" junction yields an all-optical tunable add-drop multiplexer.

[0023] The device of this embodiment is called an "add-drop" multiplexer. However, any other application where frequencies are added or dropped, including filters, and the like, may also be used. Further modifications of the setup shown in Fig. 1 are possible. However, these modifications may still allow tunability by a mechanical change of the effective period length of the holographic grating.

[0024] Another embodiment is shown in Figure 2. The wavelength which is dropped in this embodiment is selectable as in the above embodiments. In the embodiment of Figure 2, the storage material 200 includes a hologram 210, e.g., in the form of a grating. A rotation element 205 is provided to rotate the crystal in a way such that the effective period length Λ of the hologram is changed and by these means the Bragg condition is changed, as is explained above.

[0026] The direction of movement of the crystal need not be circular as explained above, but rather could be of any shape. The motor which moves the crystal can then be a linear stepper motor or a DC servo motor, or other device that can move the position of the holographic recording material.

The output signal-passed elements may be sent to a double prism 250 which retro-reflects the passed light 249 as light 251, which travels in the same direction as light 249, but in the opposite direction. The light 251 may pass another GRIN lens 252 to a y junction 253 which combines with new light from an add port 254.

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[0028] As in the above, the "y" junction may be replaced by a coupler that couples the light out of the "in" fiber and that directs the light onto the hologram in such a way that it is Bragg matched and collected by the element 252. Also as described above, the electronic detection system may be replaced by an optical system that couples the light, to name one example, back into a fiber. Applying both changes yields again an all-optical tunable add-drop multiplexer.

[0029] Further modifications of the setup shown in Fig. 2 are possible. All modifications, however, may achieve tunability of frequency by a mechanical change of the effective period length of the holographic grating. The major difference to Fig. 1 is the orientation of the axis of the mechanical rotation of the hologram. In Figure 1, the axis is in the paper plane while in Figure 2 it is perpendicular to the paper plane. However, other rotational axes are possible as well.

[0030] An alternative embodiment shown in Figure 3 allows tuning using an electrically-alterable hologram. Any of a number of different various materials may be used, including electro-optic crystals and electro-optic polymers. The material has a hologram formed thereon as a fixed reflection grating, with a length and orientation. The holographic storage material may be formed of any material where the refractive index can be changed

by application of an electric field. For example, this may include electro-optic polymers, liquid-crystal dispersed polymers, and electro-optic oxide crystals such as lithium niobate, barium titanate, potassium niobate, strontium-barium niobate mixed, and potassium-tantalate niobate mixed crystals. In general, any material which can be used to make a hologram, and which has a variable refractive index can be used.

[0031] The refractive index of the crystal may be changed by an external electric field. The refractive index may vary, for example, between 1.35 and 1.45. By varying the refractive index, the effective length, and hence the Bragg wavelength, can be changed. The same formula as it was given above applies: $\lambda \propto 2n\Lambda$. By tuning the refractive index n , the wavelength of the reflected light λ is correspondingly tuned. In this way, certain information is reflected based on its wavelength, while other optical information is allowed to pass.

[0032] In operation, the signal 300 passes through the optical system 301 into the material 310. The material 310 is formed with a hologram 315 in the shape of a diffraction grating. Wavelengths within the signal 300 that match certain conditions in the grating are reflected as 304, and output through optical system 319 on to fiber 320. This forms the drop channel 321.

Information which does not correspond to the frequency in the grating is passed to the output fiber 325 as signal 326. A "y" junction 327 allows another signal 328 to be added from an add port to form the composite signal 329.

[0033] In operation, the Bragg wavelength can be changed to render the device tunable, to change the dropped signal 321. As explained above, the "y" junction might be replaced by an additional waveguide with a coupler that directs the light onto the hologram that it is diffracted into the "out" channel. This yields an all-optical tunable add-drop multiplexer. Further modifications of the setup are possible. However, the key feature is always the same: The effective optical period length of the holographic grating is changed by a change of the refractive index n while the mechanical effective period length Λ of the diffraction grating is kept constant.

[0034] An embodiment shown in Figure 4 uses a moving mirror to change the angular relation between the incoming light beam, and the hologram. In contrast to the Figures 1 and 2, however, this embodiment changes the direction of the incoming light beam while the holographic grating stays mechanically in a fixed position. An advantage is that the dropped light will always travel in the same direction based on the direction of the hologram grating.

Also, since the mirror may have less mass than the hologram, selection may be carried out faster.

[0035] In this embodiment, the input signal 400 is coupled to a lens 402 and to a movable mirror 404 which directs the input light to the hologram element 415. Light which does not correspond to the resonant frequency of the hologram is passed as 420. The passed light is then reflected by reflection element 422, and returned on path 424, via the mirror 404, and to the output fiber 450. Note that the output fiber 450 is in substantially the same orientation and direction as the input fiber 400. The movable first mirror 404 is used as parts of both the optical system for the output (first side of the mirror) and for the dropped output (second side of the mirror).

[0036] The light which does fulfill the Bragg condition is diffracted as 430, to a retro-reflector array 432, 434, and is reflected by the mirror 404, and output as an output signal 440.

Signal 440 includes the information from the dropped channel. In this way, the input and output signals may travel in different directions with the output traveling in a direction substantially perpendicular to the input. The mirror 404 may be rotated as shown to change the area 416. An optical add port can be introduced simply by placing nearby the fiber for the drop channel a fiber for the add channel. The "add" light will travel

[0037] Combinations of the tuning mechanisms that are disclosed in the Figures 1 to 4 are also possible. One example is rough-tuning by mechanical rotation and fine-tuning by external electrical fields.

[0039] For example, the above has described the waveguides being optical fibers. Of course, any kind of waveguide which is capable of containing and passing light may be used, including, but not limited to, a waveguide formed on a semiconductor chip.

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gratings with spatially varying fringe spacing ("chirped gratings").

[0041] Other embodiments are within the disclosed invention.

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